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RATNA PEACE INITIATIVE TEACHES MEDITATION TO INCARCERATED VETERANS

The Ratna Peace Initiative (RPI) has been teaching meditation in prisons for the past 15 years. More recently, we've developed a program to offer mindfulness practice techniques as a psychological tool for the relief of symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in combat and/or other military trauma veterans. RPI currently offers weekly free programs in Denver as well as Black Hawk (Gilpin County).

It is a tragedy of the times that behavioral manifestations of PTSD, which include panic & anxiety attacks, rage, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence, have led to prison sentences for a significant number of military vets. PTSD is in fact beginning to be recognized to contribute significantly to such behavior, often resulting in incarceration of vets psychologically traumatized while serving their country. Currently, there are about 140,000 veterans languishing in United States prisons.

Over Memorial Day week-end, the RPI staff was enormously pleased to be in Portland, Oregon conducting a mindfulness meditation retreat for combat veterans at the Oregon State Penitentiary (Salem). RPI Staff Margot and Cliff Neuman and Gary Allen ran a day-long program introducing the principles and practice of mindfulness to incarcerated vets who are members of a PTSD Support Group in the Oregon prison. Ratna had the extraordinary opportunity to see Memorial Day as a reminder that service to one's country often comes at a very high price. The program was received enthusiastically, and Ratna received a request to return for a subsequent day-long session.